



# Reality Tours and Travel: A Community Perception on Slum Tourism in Dharavi

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**Abstract:** *Slum tourism has become extremely popular in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is mostly prominent in developing countries across the globe, however in Mumbai it is still a relatively new industry. With its escalating use, slum tourism has generated a heated and critical debate especially concerning ethics. However, scholarly research on slum tourism remains limited and fragmented, especially in Mumbai. With this, very often the community which is directly impacted by slum tourism rarely get to voice their opinions in the debate. Therefore, in collaboration with and specifically looking at Reality Tours and Travel and its affiliated NGO Reality Gives, this report and its research findings aim to advance the theoretical discussion surrounding slum tourism today. It will do this by providing a valuable contribution and analysis into the perceptions of the Dharavi community using a qualitative empirical approach.*

**Keywords:** *Dharavi, Mumbai, Perceptions, Slum tourism, Reality*

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*It should be acknowledged that this report was derived in part from my Durham University Department of Geography undergraduate dissertation. Much of the content in this report will also be used in my dissertation.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are over 20 million people now living in Mumbai, India and subsequently the demand for space is facing new pressures. With this continuous and exponential increase in the population and being India's modern megacity, Mumbai has become a site for thought-provoking talk and research in recent years. Dharavi is at the heart of this megacity and it is often placed in the spotlight concerning the demand for space. Notoriously known as one of Asia's largest slums, it is often associated with numerous negative perceptions (Sharma, 2000; Swarup, 2006). In fact, these perceptions have manifested into a distinct stigmatized imagination particularly for westerners and foreign tourists (Sanyal, 2015). However, a multiplicity of scholars such as Weinstein (2014) strive to highlight how Dharavi transcends these representations to also encompass a broad range of entrepreneurship and businesses which makes it a unique 'slum'.

Across the world and especially in developing countries, contemporary slum tourism has accelerated and begun to spread in many urban areas. In Dharavi, this form of tourism, like the emerging scholarship, attempts to challenge the typical negative representations of the 'slum' though showing tourists its 'reality'. It is often argued that the emergence of slum tourism is due to people's increasing fascination to get a taste of 'real life' (Dyson, 2011). This is partly influenced by the media who portray slums in a way which heightens people's curiosity to visit. Alternatively, slum tourism also delivers opportunities to benefit the community and its residents. The Reality Group (*Reality Tours and Travel* and its sister NGO *Reality Gives*) provide a variety of projects in Dharavi developed through the profits and revenue of its tours.

The concept of slum tourism has also gained significant momentum within academia and in the tourism industry (Dürr and Jaffe, 2012). In recent years, various scholars such as Dyson (2011), Meschkank (2011) and Frenzel (2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012) have progressively written about this phenomenon. What correspondingly seems to be on the increase, is the great deal of deliberation from the scholars, journalists and media across the globe who have criticised the ethics of this practice and the tourists' motivations for visiting. However, the personal opinions and experiences of the residents inside the 'slum' have hardly been written about. And with this, existing scholarship tends to lack accurate or solid case studies.

Responding to the gap in literature which has tried to explore the debate around slum tourism through fragmented case studies and viewpoints (Dürr and Jaffe, 2012), this empirical study solely focuses on the community. It will provide an up-to-date study of Nieck

Slikker's (2014) thesis titled, "*Perceptions of the Dharavi community regarding slum tourism and affiliated NGO operations*". When arguing if slum tours are good or bad, or perhaps even in the middle, it is crucial to understand the viewpoint of the 'slum' residents because they are directly affected. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate slum tourism practice in relation to the charity Reality Tours and Travel and its affiliated NGO Reality Gives in Dharavi. The results will additionally help the Reality Group to understand the current effects and successfulness of its work, whilst recommending any improvements. This study is in no way representational for all slum tour practices across the globe. However, just as Slikker (2014: p.8) states in his thesis, this report will "be of value on an international scale as a benchmark" by providing a valuable case study.

### *1.1. Research Questions*

This research finds its empirical focus using semi-structured interviews in collaboration with Reality Tours and Travel. This area of interest has been translated into the following research questions:

1. The perceptions of the Dharavi community on slum tours
2. The perceptions of the Dharavi community on Reality Gives
3. The impacts of slum tourism on the Dharavi community

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. *Introducing Dharavi*

Before discussing the perception of the community in Dharavi regarding slum tourism, it is important to understand the historical development of this settlement and its importance as a geographical site in Mumbai, India. Dharavi originated as a small fishing village (a *Koliwada*) which was “born in a legal limbo, without any consistent government investment or planning support” (Brugmann, 2013: p. 42). Located on Parel Island, one of 7 Islands, it was originally just a swamp area and only a small number of people lived there (Sharma, 2000). Made from a mixture of formal and informal buildings, it was originally located at the edge of *Bombay* on a creek which led to the Arabian Sea (Sharma, 2000: xxi). As it was situated at the edge of *Bombay*, Dharavi was not so central to development.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British implemented a large-scale engineering project, which merged the 7 islands together to make more land. This led to the drying up of the creek and the establishment of one island (Sharma, 2000). The emergence of new land served as a hotspot for incoming migration. People entered Mumbai looking for jobs but the development and rising living prices of south Mumbai meant that many migrants were forced to live in the outskirts such as Dharavi. Here it was cheaper and more affordable (Sharma, 2000). Now Dharavi is filled with a mosaic of migrants, religions and cultures and Sharma (2000) states that this has defined the history of Dharavi. Industries grew inside Dharavi and over time it has developed into a large industrial hub.

As the population proliferated and Mumbai globalised, developers leapfrogged over the settlement and continued to build around it. This meant that Dharavi was no longer at the edge of the city, but instead it became *the heart of the city*; it was engulfed inside the modern metropolis. Now many commonly describe it as ‘a City within a City’ (Perara, 2016).

### 2.2. *Dharavi at present*

Today, Dharavi is located near Mumbai’s international airport, neighbour to Mumbai’s commercial complex (Bandra Kurla Complex) and between three main railway lines (Perara, 2016). For this reason, despite originally being low in demand, its centrality has caused the land to become extremely valuable (see fig. 1). In fact, the government and developers are attempting to redevelop Dharavi through the Slum Redevelopment Project (SRP). This is an attempt to “transform Dharavi into a middle class residential enclave and commercial area”



(Weinstein, 2009: p.vii). However, due to several reasons implementing this throughout Dharavi has been extremely difficult and only a handful of projects have taken place so far.

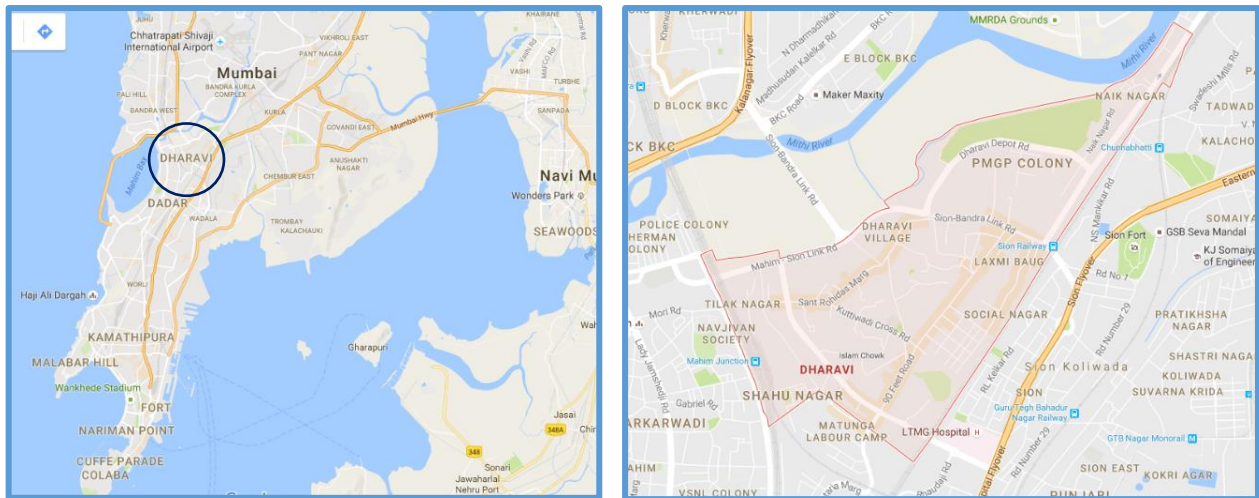


Figure 1: Maps of Dharavi (Retrieved from Google on 21.09.2016)

Mumbai, India's 'modern megacity' (Mahapatra, 2015), currently has an urban population of approximately 22 million, making it one of the most populous cities on the globe (World Population Review, 2016). Along with the high population it has often been dubbed as 'slumbai' because 'slums' are said to make up a considerable part of its urban landscape. It is impossible to know the exact population of Dharavi, however various accounts are now estimating that it is approximately 1 million (Rolfes in Sharpley and Stone, 2010). It has an estimated 18,000 people per acre (Sharma, 2000) and is approximately 551. For this reason it is often dubbed as one of *Asia's largest Slum's* (Dyson, 2012; Patel, 2007).

### 2.3. *Imagining the 'slum'*

When people often think of a 'slum' they might think of places with *sub-human* conditions (Sharma, 2000). The 'slum' is often recognised and stigmatised as a place with an illegal status, crime, dirt, disease and crowdedness. Swarup (2006) likewise states that the 'slum' is understood by many as being 'a cancerous lump' on the urban landscape. This is often an imagination created through literature and the media. A good example of this is Danny Boyle's 2008 film *Slumdog Millionaire* has heightened Dharavi's negative connotations through its explicit scenes of crime and an unhygienic environment.

There is no denying that Dharavi has poverty and in many cases, people do live in under-developed conditions. However, amidst the poverty there are an extensive amount of enterprises and businesses which have increasingly developed (Weinstein, 2014). As

Sharma puts it (2000: p. 78) “every square inch of Dharavi is being used for some productive activity”. These industries range from textiles, food, recycling, metal, pottery and leather (see fig. 2). In fact, many of these products in these businesses are not only used in Dharavi, but are also exported nationally and internationally. As much as 80% of Mumbai’s recycling is said to happen inside Dharavi. Often, peoples’ imaginations of what Dharavi is, are based on accounts of the past where Dharavi was once an extremely crime ridden place with an immense amount of poverty.



Figure 2: Images of some of the industries in Dharavi (Images courtesy of Reality Tours and Travel)

#### 2.4. The Slum Tour

*“Travel is all about getting under the skin of a place. You can only do this for yourself, so go on the slum tour” (Pickard, 2007: p.1)*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, slum tourism has gained significant momentum in the tourist industry (Seaton, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012). This phenomenon is particularly on the increase in developing countries of the Global South such as South Africa, Brazil and more recently, India (Rofles, 2010). It started with the favelas in Rio de Janeiro 16 years ago, and, since

then it has spread across the globe (Ma, 2010). The media has been a catalyst for this growth, especially again for example, the award-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* (Steinbrink, 2012). The Media has the power to create a stigmatized image in the imagination of those who might not have direct familiarity with the 'slum'.

Although slum tourism may be a recent emergence in India, the curiosity of how the *other half* live is not new. The notion of slum tourism first originated as *slumming*. This was where the wealthier class visited the poor in the poorest parts of Victorian London during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Frenzel and Koens, 2012; Diekmann and Hannam, 2012; Steinbrink, 2012). Even during this time the poor areas "symbolized the dark, the low, the unknown side of the city" (Steinbrink *et al*, 2012: p. 218). It was suggested that this was an extremely widespread phenomenon for pleasure and for obtaining knowledge on urban poverty (Koven, 2004).

There is a re-emerging interest in slum tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Diekmann and Hannam, 2012) but unlike the 19<sup>th</sup> century *slumming* which mostly occurred in the poor parts of developed countries, contemporary slum tourism tends to occur in developing countries. Today Mumbai exemplifies one of the most prominent examples of slum tourism growth due to the high amount of 'slum' dwellers and the curiosity of tourists (Frenzel and Koens, 2012; Basu, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012). India itself is a hotspot for foreign tourism; it had an estimated 5 million people visiting in 2007 (Rolfes, 2010: p. 435). Perhaps with the increasing ability for people to travel around the world, more people will participate in the slum tourism phenomenon to see the 'disadvantaged districts' (Rolfes, 2010: p. 421).

Slum tourism today involves a guide who takes tourists as part of an organized tour through a more 'disadvantaged' area of the city (Rolfes, 2010; Frenzel, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012) or a 'harsher side of tourist destinations' (Sharpley and Stone, 2010: p. 57). These tours can take approximately 2 hours on foot. The guide describes the 'slum' life to the tourists and may take them to visit some of the businesses and residential areas en route. Through the tours, they get to see the daily activities of the community from the work space to the living conditions, although the tourists may not directly interact with the residents (Ma, 2010: p. 4). Part of the tour provided by Reality Tours and Travel involves a visit to a leather factory and a recycling factory to learn more about life and the industries. In fact, in a recycling factory tourists can go onto the rooftop to get a panoramic view of Dharavi from above (see fig. 3) (Ma, 2010: p. 4). The tour is even accompanied by a meal provided by one of the residents inside Dharavi.





*Figure 3: Image of the rooftop view on the Reality Tours and Travel slum tour (Image courtesy of the Reality Tours and Travel)*

#### 2.4.1. Reality Tours and Travel

*“We are trying to dispel the myth that people there sit around doing nothing, that they’re criminals. We show it for what it is—a place where people are working hard, struggling to make a living and doing it in an honest way” – Reality Tours and Travel (Lefevre, 2010 in: Steinbrink et al 2012: p. 72)*

Reality Tours and Travel (RTT) is a tour company based in Mumbai founded by Krishna Pujari and Christopher Way in 2004 (Meschkank, 2011; Ma, 2010). Since 2006 it has offered 2-4 hour tours of Dharavi as well as a range of other tours around Mumbai, Rajasthan and Delhi. Today it is still the dominant tour company in Dharavi (Dyson, 2012) although since its emergence and success, other slum tour companies and individuals have started in the area (Sanyal, 2015). These, for example, include Slum Gods (tours started in 2009), Be The Local (tours started in 2010) and Inside Mumbai Tours (tours started in 2011).

Slum tourism can provide a way of challenging the stigmatic representations of the ‘slum’ by educating tourists about its reality (Ma, 2010; Sanyal, 2015). RTT are trying to dismantle and dispel the stereotypical representations and myths associated with Dharavi and its residents through guided tours. They are also trying to raise awareness of the prevailing issues which the settlement does have, such as, education and empowerment. They do this by providing what is known as *authentic* (Rolfes, 2010) *cultural* (Ma, 2010) or *reality* tours

(Rofles in: Sharpley and Stone, 2010). They attempt to prove that the life in the settlement goes beyond what the tourist may have seen or heard in TV, books, news or other forms of media; it attempts to “make the incomprehensible accessible” (Weinstein, 2009: p.1). Through the slum tour of Dharavi, the poverty is transformed for the tourist because they get to see the enterprises, entrepreneurship and diligence which is occurring there (Frenzel and Koens, 2012).

Also, unlike most typical tour companies, 80% of the profits from RTT goes to its sister organisation Reality Gives (RG) to help the community in Dharavi, provide social benefits and create poverty relief. The company believes that “tourism can and should be a force for local development” (Reality Tours and Travel, 2016). They run many educational projects and empowerment programmes for those who are underprivileged in the community (see fig. 4 and fig.5). This exemplifies a form of tourism that goes beyond the traditional practices of ‘business for profit’. It goes beyond to provide humanitarian help.



*Figure 4: Images of some of the projects run by Reality Gives (Images courtesy of Reality Tours and Travel)*

Youth Empowerment Programme	Royal City School
Computer Classes	Girls Football for Development
English Conversation Course	Soft Skills Curriculum
Mobile English Language Learning	Boys Cricket Academy

*Figure 5: Table of the current projects run by Reality Gives*

#### 2.4.2. Tourist motivations

Many empirical studies have questioned why seeing the ‘slum’ as a branch of tourism is so popular. Urry (2002) for one, suggests that it allows tourists to see what they expect to see which is poverty, and they truly get to see this when touring the ‘slum’. It is similar to the practices of *slumming* in Victorian London during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Urry (2002) describes this experience as being “out of the ordinary” because it allows the tourists to see a world completely different to what they might live in. Tourism is itself about exploration and experiencing the ‘reality’ of a place and Dyson (2011) states that slum tourism actually returns to this practice. It allows the tourists to get a sense of real life for the poorest communities there even if this is in the poorest parts of a city (Ma, 2010; Melik, 2012; Meschkank, 2012). Especially as Mumbai is filled with a lot of poverty and informal settlements, a tourist may feel it is necessary to learn more about this way of life. Very often though, according to RTT most of the tourists are middle class westerners or those who do not live in Mumbai (Frenzel and Koens, 2012). However, despite past and recent scholarship addressing this issue, studies are still scarce in this field and therefore reasons for the tourists’ motivation in visiting ‘slums’ cannot be completely explained.

#### 2.4.3. Criticism

With its growth, slum tourism has provoked a lot of criticism which is causing it to be thrown into national and international discussion in recent years. There are generally two opposing views which argue whether slum tourism is simply good or bad (Zijma, 2010). Unlike other forms of tourism, the ethics of this practice is what has made it highly controversial. Thus, a lot of journals, media and literature have been critically vocal; since 2008 over 2000 news sources have taken part in covering the controversy (Ma, 2010), and even since then there has been much more coverage. They have denounced the implementation of slum tours in cities, often accusing it as ‘poverty porn’, ‘voyeurism’ or the ‘tourist gaze’ (Frenzel and Koens, 2012; Frenzel, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012, Basu, 2012 in Steinbrink *et al*, 2012).

Critics have declared it as being exploitative as it is assumed to make westerners feel better about their 'situation in life', states Weiner in the New York Times (2008). According to Weiner (2008: p. 1 in; Basu, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012) one of the strongest criticisms in academia has come from Professor David Fennell who asked, "would you want people stopping outside your front door every day, or maybe twice a day, snapping a few pictures of you and making some observations about your lifestyle?". The speculations of the tourists' motivations are also a catalyst for such debates (Schimmelpfennig, 2010 in Frenzel and Koens, 2012). Where it could be argued that these criticisms fall short is that they overlook the local aspirations and need for development which slum tourism can enhance. Tourism is itself a path to development and poverty alleviation because it "funnels tourist dollar into the slums" (Weiner, 2009: p.1). What is also interesting is that despite the criticism, the industry is "gaining importance both in terms of tourism and in economic terms" (Steinbrink, 2012: p. 214).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The overarching research inquiry was to explore the community's perceptions on slum tourism in Dharavi, Mumbai. As such, qualitative empirical research was conducted during the months of July and September 2016. The method used in the field was semi-structured interviews and this was conducted in collaboration with RTT.

As stated in the introduction, there were three questions used in framing the research. The first was the community perception on slum tours. This question was designed to analyse what the community feel about the tourists who regularly walk through Dharavi. This will also address if the residents have any knowledge of RTT and if this affects their perceptions on slum tourism. The second research question is the community perception of RG. This was important because it also shows if any knowledge on RG has any effect on how the community feel about the slum tour operations. The third question analyses the impacts of slum tourism on the community of Dharavi. This will demonstrate if the community feel the slum tourism is bringing any positive or negative influences.

#### 3.1. Sample

The qualitative data collected is not meant to be wholly representative of the Dharavi community in any capacity. Interviews were conducted over the two months. Originally, it was assumed that only around 20 interviews could be conducted as the logistics of the research and its difficulties were uncertain. However, surpassing this target, 81 interviews were conducted in the end. This was more than enough for the study because any more interviews might have resulted in *theoretical saturation* (Guest *et al*, 2006). The data collected had enough results and no new data had emerged. Additionally, although a *probabilistic* sample would be good to have been made, the population of Dharavi is very uncertain and unofficial. As such, it would not have been possible to draw a legitimate sample size. Even if a probabilistic sample was possible, due to the time frame of this research and the resources available it would not have been possible to complete it. For this reason, this study uses a *non-probabilistic* sample size.

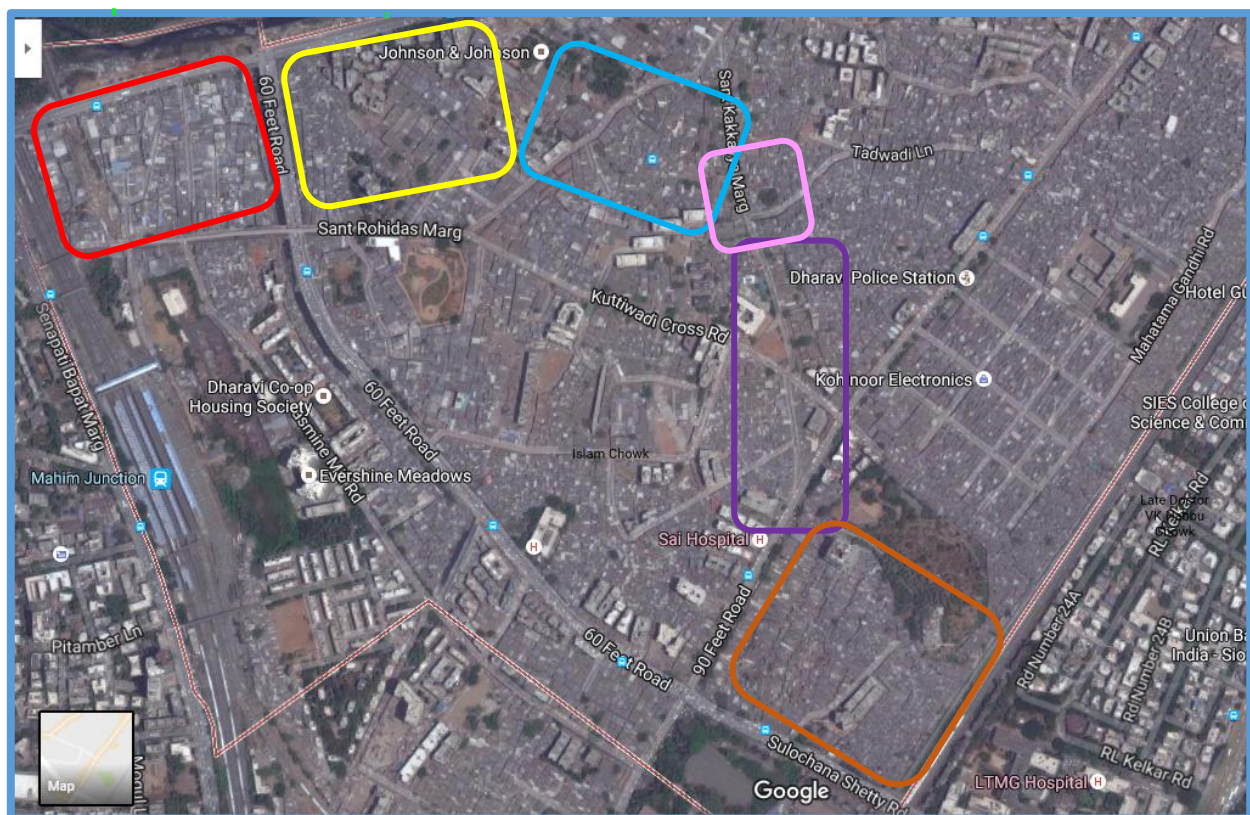
#### 3.2. Research Location

With the time frame and resources available, the research was conducted in specific locations within Dharavi to extract the most amount of useful information. Like Nieck Slikker's (2014) thesis, the focus area was mostly around and on the tour route used by RTT. This made the most practical sense because the research was to focus on the



perceptions surrounding RTT. Therefore, it seemed necessary to interview most of the residents where the company was most visible. Some interviews had also been conducted around the tour route but not on the exact lanes of the tour route. This enabled a wider gathering of knowledge from the community concerning slum tourism. This further provided an insight into whether RTT and RG have been widely acknowledged by the population in Dharavi; wider influence over the population may have impacts on how the community understand slum tourism today.

Dharavi is split into different areas of use; residential, commercial and industrial (Chatterji, 2005; p. 199). The research route touched upon these different areas to enable an extensive range of answers from different genders, backgrounds and age groups.



*Figure 6: Image of the research tour route (Image retrieved from Google 23.09.2016)*

Figure 6 highlights the areas where the research was conducted. It is similar to Nieck Sleikker's previous route and shows that the interviews covered a wide area. Zone 1 (red) is the industrial area which is filled with many industries such as recycling, textiles and metal work. Zone 2 (yellow) is mostly a residential area but it is also filled with Dharavi's leather industries. In fact, one of the most established leather factories is visited as part of the RTT tour. Here the tourists are able to see the processes, learn about the business and buy some

of the products. Zone 3 (blue) is the residential part filled with lots of shops, schools and residents. Zone 4 (light pink) is a busy area filled with residents, shops and restaurants. It also has a community centre run by RG. Zone 5 (purple) is also a residential area on the tour route. Zone 6 (orange) is the pottery area known as *Kumbharwada* (see fig. 7). It is one of the oldest parts of Dharavi and many of the pottery businesses have been passed down through generations. The RTT office is also located on the edge of Kumbharwada by 60 Feet Road.



*Figure 7: Image of pottery in Dharavi Kumbharwada*

### **3.3. Semi-structured Interviews**

*“Talking with people is an excellent way of gathering information” (Longhurst, 2016: p. 143)*

To gather the community’s perspectives on slum tourism, a qualitative approach was undertaken because “the product of qualitative research is richly descriptive” (Merriam, 2002: p. 5). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary means of data collection because it allowed members of the Dharavi community to narrate their own experiences

about the world they live in (Kitchen and Tate, 2000: p. 213; Valentine, 2005; Guest *et al*, 2006; Dunn, 2016). Punch (1998: p.168) likewise states that interviews “are one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others”. They provide a way of extracting experiences from marginalized groups (Dunn, 2016). This method also fills knowledge gaps which other methods, such as participant observation are unable to ‘bridge’. Furthermore, the nature of semi-structured interviews made the interview process much more informal and conversational. As Kvale, (1996: p. 5) states, conversations are the “basic mode of human interaction”. This was important because having an informal setting allowed the interviewees to perhaps feel more comfortable and express more of their personal opinions, thus it allows for more data collection.

The interview preparation involved a collaborative process with RTT who initially provided the interview questions and research focus. All guides assisting the research were briefed about the research purpose and aims before setting off into the field. The interviews were conducted with a diverse range of participants from different backgrounds including potters, businessmen, shop keepers, barbers, housewives, children and the elderly. The recruitment of participants for the interviews mostly involved approaching people at random (Rosenthal, 1991). It was difficult to prearrange the interviews because the residents were very busy with their daily activities.

As this research involved a community which used multiple languages, translation was needed. RTT provided guides who each translated the interviews in the field whilst I recorded them using a voice recorder (Dunn, 2016). It is acknowledged that several problems arose from translating, including the potential for inaccurate and fragmented answers from the respondents. There were times when the translator had a long conversation with the participant and gave me a short response. While I tried to prevent this this limitation, it was something out of my control and therefore I simply had to acknowledge it during the coding of the interviews. Each day, RTT provided a different guide, but this was very useful because it meant that not only would each of the guides see how the residents felt about their work but it also provided fresh enthusiasm for the project. While issues of translating arose, it was important to have the guides due to their familiarity and knowledge of the settlement.

### 3.4. *Research Ethics*

The process of qualitative research in areas of poverty involving personal opinions and experiences raises questions of ethical considerations (Esterberg, 2002). As explained by



DiCocco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006: p. 319) the main ethical consideration with qualitative interviews include: reducing harm to the participants, protecting interviewees' information, informing the interviewees about the nature of the research and reducing exploitation. During the research, it was ensured that the respondents freely participated in the research based on a comprehensive understanding of the research purpose (Connolly, 2003). Verbal and written consent forms were also used and the respondents were given the choice to stop or withdraw their information from the interview at any time if they wished. To protect the respondents from harm, they were told that they were going to remain anonymous for the research purpose as opposed to 'name and shame' (Ma, 2010). The names of respondents in this report have therefore been kept anonymous. Furthermore, it was important that the respondents and the Dharavi community were not exploited for personal gain (DiCocco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). This research hoped to do the opposite by using the community perceptions regarding slum tourism to bring benefits for the community, not exploitation. The results obtained from the research will go directly to RTT and RG to help the companies improve their operations and in turn benefit the community. In addition to this, before each interview, each respondent was told about the importance of the work (Connolly, 2003).

### *3.5. Positionality*

It was important to consider how my own positionality influenced the interview process (McDowell, 1992; Longhurst, 2003). Bourke (p. 2014: p.1) states that the "identities of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process". As a female western researcher, my beliefs, background and personal experience will have affected the research process and my relationship with the respondents. Most of the community interviewed were from poorer and more marginalized backgrounds. As Bourke (2014) explains, the differences between myself and the respondents may have further lead to the marginalization of them as a vulnerable group. I also had to consider the positionality of the charity. All interviews were conducted in the presence of the RTT team who wore their blue company shirts. The presence of the company may have shaped the responses where the respondents may have felt the need to speak completely positively rather than truthfully, possibly leading to bias (Temple and Young, 2004). To overcome this challenge, I attempted to encourage each of the respondents to be as truthful as possible in their feelings and not to be intimidated by myself or the presence of RTT team. Tackling the issues of positionality was tough but the interviews could not be conducted without the charity.

## 4. RESULTS

The research findings have revealed a diverse set of results regarding the community awareness and perception towards slum tours and the Reality Group. This section will explore the results of the interviews to gain a better understanding of slum tour practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Where available, each interview response will be accompanied by the gender, occupation and birthplace, and all response categories will be explained using percentages.

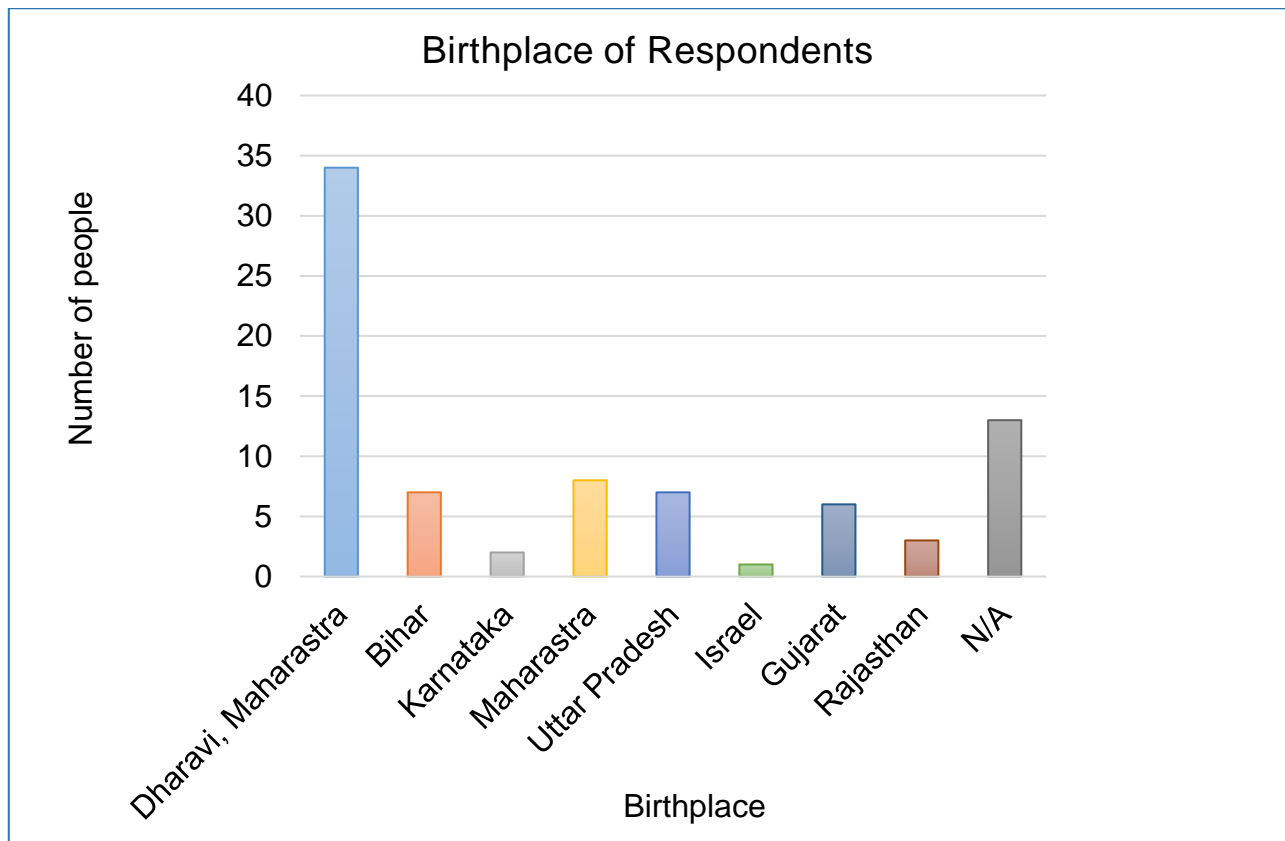
### 4.1. *The Dharavi community*

This section begins by outlining the background of the respondents including the occupation, birthplace, education and living situation. This is important because this may have influenced the respondents' answers during the interviews. All but two respondents lived inside Dharavi. However, the two respondents who did not live in Dharavi did work in Dharavi. Additionally, the age of respondents varied from 16 to 69 years but this will not be specified in the results, because like Slikker's (2014) thesis, finding enough respondents for each category was unsuccessful.

#### 4.1.1. Birthplace

As Dharavi is filled with a mosaic of migrants it was not surprising that the respondents came from a range of states across India and internationally. But despite this, the single biggest group originated from Dharavi, Maharashtra (42%) (see fig. 8). 16% of respondents did not state their birthplace, leaving the rest of the respondents (42%) with their birthplace somewhere else (in India and internationally). Within the category of being born somewhere else, there was only one international migrant. Also, most who had been born in Dharavi had explained that their family had lived there for generations. Responses for this were typically:

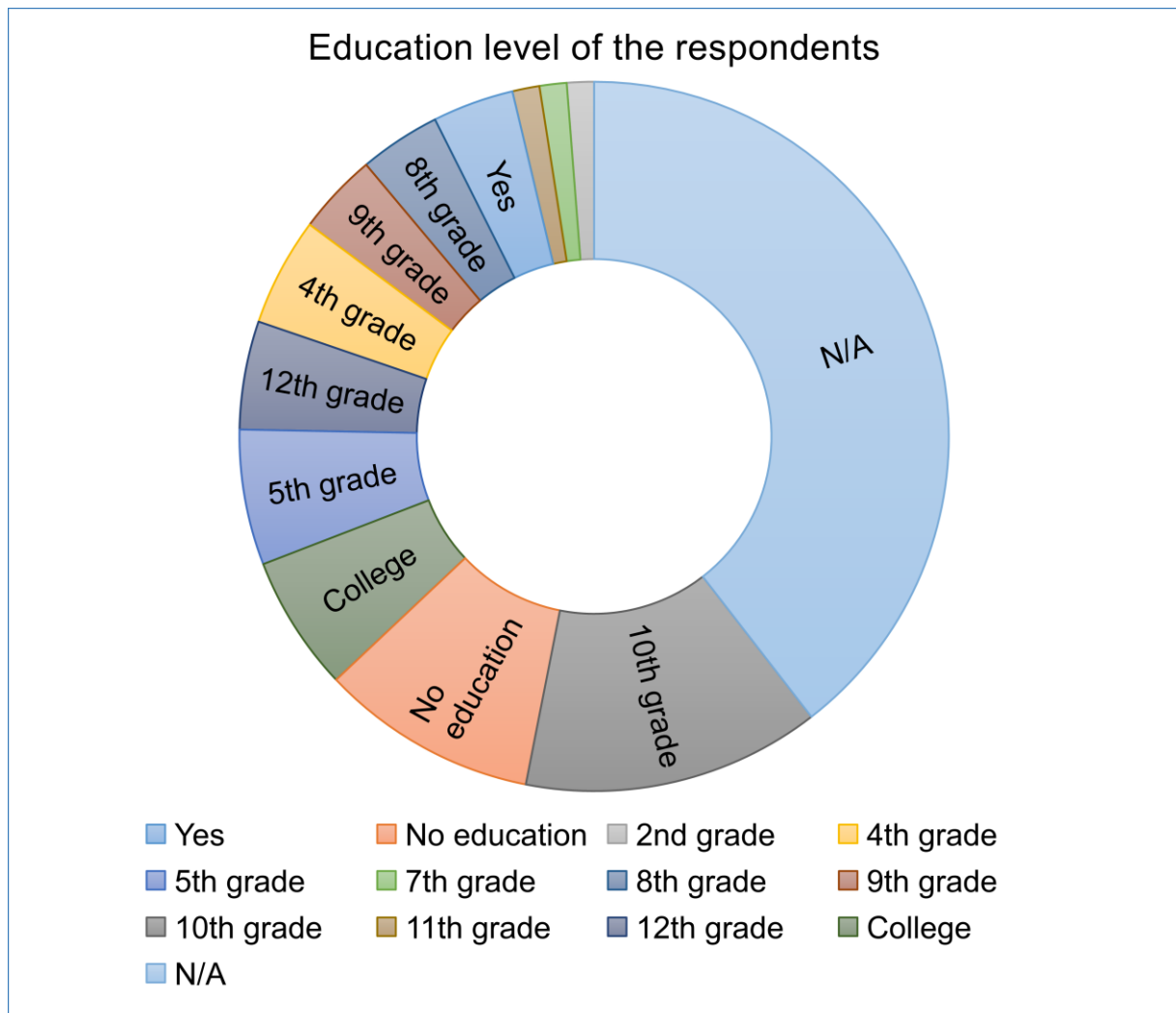
*“Born and brought up in Dharavi only but my roots are from Karnataka (.) but most of the generations have been here” (Female, housewife, Dharavi)*



*Figure 8: Birthplace of the respondents*

#### 4.1.2. Education

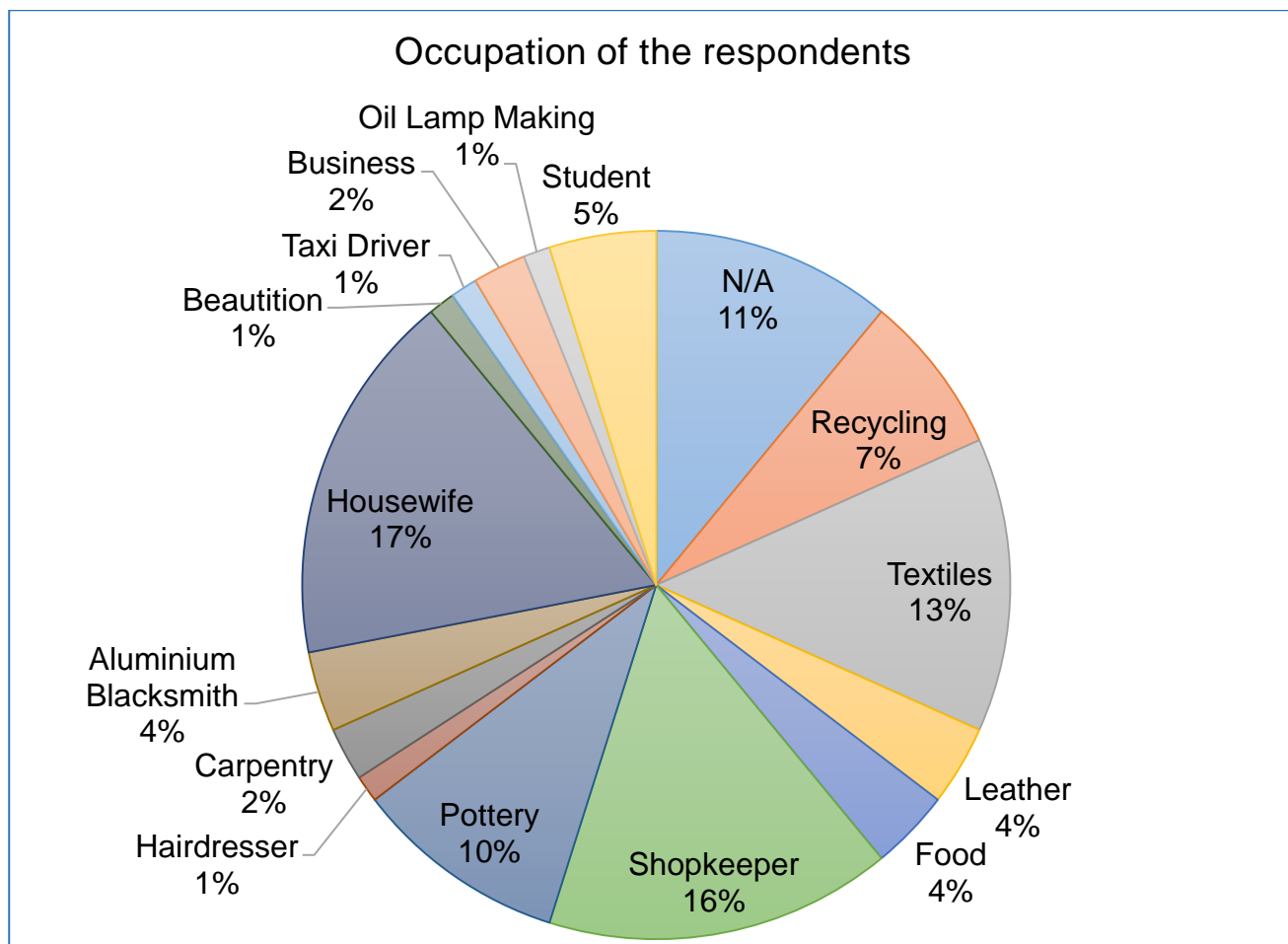
It is obvious that a large percentage of the respondents did not explain what form of education they had completed (38%) (see fig. 9). It was unknown why some respondents did not want to explain this, but on occasions some interviews ended very quickly due to the respondent's lack of interest or shyness. However, from the 62% of responses which were received, only 10% had no education while 52% had an education of some sort. Those who had an education had completed or were completing it at varying levels. The largest grade which the respondents had completed was the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, while the percentage who had completed college was very small (6%). Alternatively, 4% of respondents simply said 'yes', which was probably due to misunderstanding of the question, shyness or lack of interest to answer the question.



*Figure 9: Education level of the interviewees*

#### 4.1.3. Occupation

The occupation of respondents was very varied (see fig. 10). The occupants ranged from working in different sectors, students and housewives. When many of the respondents had talked about their occupation, it seemed that many were involved in businesses which they had inherited from their family and passed down through generations. This however, was mostly the case with respondents who worked in the pottery and leather business.



*Figure 10: Occupation of the respondents*

#### 4.1.4. Living conditions

Dharavi is a big settlement and living conditions vary significantly. In some areas, there are large courtyards, whilst other areas have narrow lanes where one can barely walk through. When conducting the research, it was evident that some families also had large spaces to live in whilst others simply had one tiny room. These rooms would have everything in them; the bed, the sitting area, storage and the kitchen. Other houses had ladders or stairs going to a separate upstairs room. Many of the families also live together or nearby. In some cases, the families lived together in large buildings which had many rooms which were generally ancestral. One respondent highlighted this when they explained:

*“The whole building is very big and in it there are three families (.) so they have not divided the house but they have split the house so they can live” (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

Furthermore, these buildings were not always made of ‘metal scraps’ but instead they were made of concrete and bricks. While the living conditions varied, all respondents were asked what they believed needed the biggest improvements. Interestingly, most respondents had



explained that they thought their living situation was ‘normal’ and they were ‘used’ to it. When asked for an explanation, they said it is because they could not compare Dharavi to other areas or elsewhere in Mumbai because they had not left or tended not to leave Dharavi. One respondent, for example explained that Dharavi was their birthplace and they had lived there since childhood. When asked about the challenges, most of the respondents explained that the biggest challenge they faced was sanitation. Disease and hygiene is a big problem in Dharavi especially during the monsoon season. The typical response for this included:

*“Sanitation is the biggest problem (.) so we need better sanitation facilities” (Male, Recycling, Dharavi)*

*“Sanitation (.) we have a shared toilet outside but of course having a personal toilet is always better (.) but till now I feel we do not have nothing” (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

Other challenges expressed included water, education and electricity. Respondents explained how water came on at specific times of the day making laundry, work and cooking quite difficult. A few respondents had voiced the need for more education. In terms of electricity, respondents had explained that there was an issue with it being cut from time to time and in many areas of Dharavi electricity wires hang dangerously and need improvement. However, most respondents explained that they felt there were no serious problems in the immediate term and in fact they were ‘ok’ with their current living situation. Only a small number of respondents said that there were no challenges at all.

#### *4.2. The perceptions of the Dharavi community on slum tours*

With the growth of RTT since 2006 and even since the emergence of other slum tour companies in Dharavi, the number of tourists visiting has proliferated. Thus, it would naturally be expected that the community would be aware of the tourists and have an impression. When the respondents were asked how often they see the tourists, the biggest response accounting for 89% said they saw the tourist’s everyday (see fig.11). With such a large percentage, it is evident that the tourist presence has gained a rather permanent place in Dharavi’s society. As such, every respondent was asked how they felt about the tourists during the present moment of the interview (see fig.12).

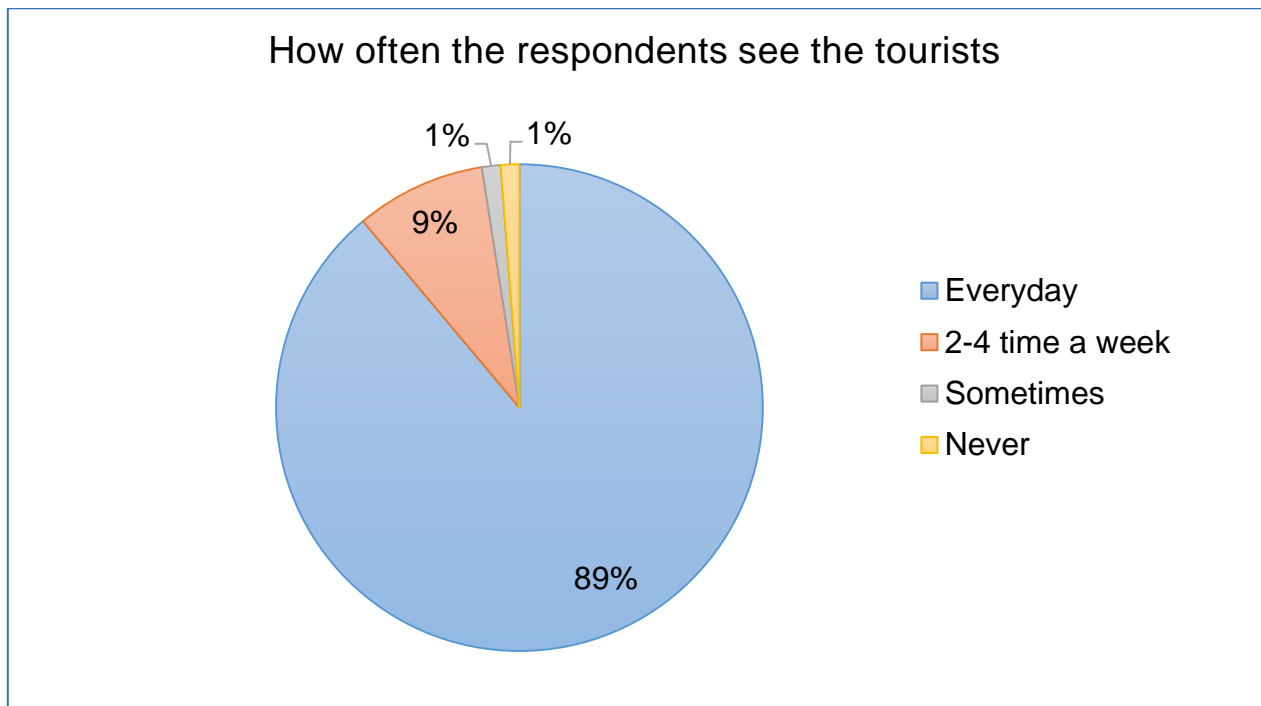


Figure 11: How often the respondents see the tourists

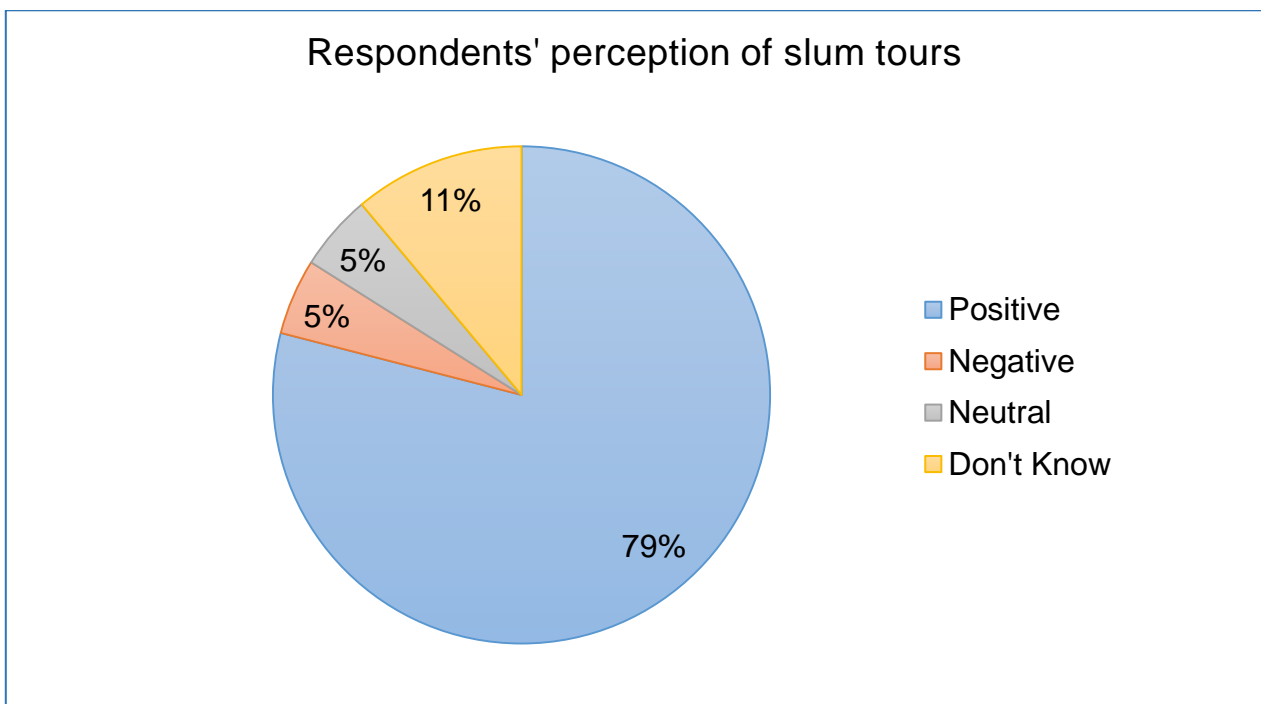


Figure 12: Respondents' perception of slum tours

#### 4.2.1. Positive impression of the slum tours

The research has indicated that a clear majority of the respondents (79%) had a positive perception towards slum tours inside Dharavi, regardless of whether they had heard of RTT or RG (see fig.12). These respondents explained that this was generally because the tourists

were 'good' and 'nice'. With this, a few respondents had explained that the tourists were considered as their guests and were thus respected and welcomed into the community. One respondent, for example, stated:

*"You are our guest and in India our guest is our god... we welcome you" (Male, Factory Owner, Dharavi)*

Other positive responses related to how slum tours challenged the external negative representations of Dharavi. As stated earlier in this report, Dharavi is often represented as a negative place and associated with crime, disease and poverty. Some respondents had acknowledged this and believed that the slum tours were a good way of showing people the reality of the settlement and how it transcends these external misrepresentations. Many of these respondents went on to explain how they believed that Dharavi encompasses more than just poverty and disease; it is filled with entrepreneurship and many people are in fact not 'poor'. These respondents also tended to be workers who were happy for the tourists to see their work and businesses because it made them 'feel good'. This was especially the case when the tourists showed positivity towards their work. Interestingly, two respondents had also explained that having the tourists made them feel good because they never get a chance to go overseas, therefore they can learn about the foreign cultures through the tourists. With this perception, a few respondents stated:

*"It is good (.) I think more people should come here because they have a bad impression of this place and coming here it is completely different (.) they think it is completely poor and some places it might be and some places it isn't" (Male, Shopkeeper, Dharavi)*

*"All the foreigners will know what is happening and know what is going on here (.) we make pots and design them and they will know how we will make that" (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

Another reason for the positive impression from respondents related to a sense of pride. Dharavi is often known as 'Asia's largest slum' and a few respondents had expressed how they were happy to know the tourists were coming from far to see the infamous settlement which 'they' lived in. This feeling of pride was manifest into the feeling that the tourists were very welcomed into the community. It was also evident that at times these respondents were not just talking about themselves but instead collectively for the community. The constant referral to 'we' as opposed to 'I' signifies that the respondents perhaps feel that others in the community share the same impression. Examples of this perception included:

*“We are Asia’s largest slum growing slowly slowly slowly (.) but we are now growing up and we are showing the world” (Male, Electro sports manager, Dharavi).*

*“It is good (.) people come from all over the world so we feel proud” (Female, Housewife, Gujarat)*

Like Slikker’s thesis, one respondent had also explained that they understood the tourists’ motivation for visiting because they too had visited other countries. This respondent explained that they visited another country to learn about the culture and this is exactly what the tourists can do when they visit Dharavi. Alternatively, a respondent explained that they enjoyed seeing the tourists because they do not get a chance to visit other countries, but they still get to see the different cultures when the tourists visit. Another respondent had expressed how they felt happy about the tourists visiting because of their appreciation of the work inside Dharavi. This respondent was in the pottery area (Kumharwada) and stated:

*“I am very happy about them (.) people walk here and praise my work (.) so I have no complaint (.) the handicraft of the people (.) if more and more come I’ll be very happy” (Male, Pottery, Dharavi)*

#### 4.2.2. Negative impression of the slum tours

While it was only a small percentage (5%) (see fig. 12), a few respondents did have a more negative perception towards slum tour practice and the tourists. Firstly, a few of these respondents had expressed their concern with the photography taken by the tourists. This was because they believed that this could affect their businesses by exposing the conditions of their work. Many of the industries inside the settlement work in sometimes small and difficult conditions. An example of this is when one respondent talked about the *Papad* food industry and its vulnerability to the media concerning hygiene. Secondly, a few respondents believed that the tourists were simply coming inside, taking pictures and then leaving without helping the community in any way. This perception fits in with the ethical argument that slum tourism is ‘voyeuristic’ (Frenzel and Koens, 2012; Frenzel, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012, Basu, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012). Two respondents expressed this view when stating:

*“There should be some changes with them coming (.) but people should help (.) they just come see and go” (Male, Garments, Dharavi)*

*“They see things and come over here (.) and then they go away” (Male, Shopkeeper, Maharashtra)*

Although this might be the case for some slum tour practices, it was evident that these respondents were unaware of RTT and their charity projects inside Dharavi which aimed to help the community. It highlights that potentially having a lack of knowledge of why the tourists come into the settlement has the power to shape a negative view in the community.

Two respondents had also expressed their frustration in that the tourists do not interact with the community. Again, while this response concurs with the negative perceptions of slum tourism, these opinions were clearly based on slum tourism in general and thus may not be applicable to all slum tour companies or tourists. One respondent, for example, stated:

*“They walk around and don’t bother to interact” (Male, Garments, Gujarat)*

#### 4.2.3. Neutral/unknown impressions of slum tours

On the other hand 5% of respondents had neutral perception of slum tourism. Alternatively, a small group of respondents fell under the category of not knowing how they felt about the slum tourism (11%). It was unclear why these respondents had this perception, although a few seemed to not be particularly bothered about the presence of particularly the westerners. It also appeared that these respondents were unaware about the reasons for the tourist presence. However a few of them had a guess about the motivation behind slum tours and stated:

*“I don’t know why they come here” (Male, Pottery, Dharavi)*

*“They come here to learn I guess” (Male, Caterer, Rajasthan)*

*“They are here doing research or something” (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

#### 4.2.4. Ways in which the impressions have changed over time

With the varied respondent’s impressions of the tourists during the time of the interview, it was interesting to see how their impressions of slum tours had changed over time. A very diverse response has emerged in the results.

Firstly, several respondents had explained that initially seeing the tourists came with surprise, confusion and curiosity. Having never seen the tourists before, the community were unsure about their presence and motivations for visiting the settlement. As an emerging practice, which had not been conducted before in Dharavi, the influx of the tourists came as a mystery. Respondents had explained how initially people in the community used to come out of their homes to watch the tourists walk by, but since then their presence has become

'normal' and the community have become used to it. Thus, since the first encounters, seeing the tourists has become somewhat less of a spectacle to the community.

Some respondents had explained that seeing the foreigners for the first time brought about negative perceptions. When asked for an explanation, these respondents replied that it was because they initially thought the tourists had bad intentions for visiting. They did not think that there would be another intention, such as, educational. Two respondents, for example, explained:

*"Before when the foreigners started coming here err people used to use electricity without meters (.) err black meters because not paying money (.) so there was inspection and we lost our electricity connection (.) so we thought that this is all because of the tourists (.)...*

*then my boss explained that there is no connection between the electricity and the foreigners (.) they are coming here to learn how people are taking waste recycling it and forming new things (.) and now it is quite okay and it is normal because I see every day"*

**(Male, Recycling, Dharavi)**

*"Earlier when people used to come over here the people were really scared (.) we didn't know why people were coming here (.) was it going to be used for a negative thing (.) we also thought it might be plans for building etc. (.) but now we are aware of what is happening and we are happy to meet people and welcoming"*

**(Female, Housewife, Dharavi)**

Interestingly, despite having this negative first impression, once the respondents were told over time about what was happening and why the tourists were visiting, this impression had changed to become positive and/or confused. Knowing that the tourists were coming for educational purposes brought about a sense of relief and reassurance that the tourists had no malicious intentions. However, for some it brought about more confusion as to why the tourists wanted to see Dharavi, with members of the community questioning what there was to see. For many of them, the living situation, businesses and industries were a normal part of life and not a spectacle. One respondent, for example, stated:

*"The first time we saw the tourists the impression was not very good (.) we were not really aware of what was happening (.) but when I got involved in the activities I actually found out that the tourists were providing help and after getting involved it was good"*

**(Female, Housewife, Dharavi)**

#### 4.2.5. Community awareness of Reality Tours and Travel

RTT have an increasingly prominent presence in Dharavi, conducting daily tours on a specific tour route. With this, as figure 13 illustrates, 60% of respondents had heard of RTT while only 40% had not. This is a large increase in awareness since Slikker's research in 2014, which is perhaps due to the increased publicity of the company and the number of tourists visiting through use of the company. Surprisingly however, the percentage of respondents who had heard of the company could hardly recognize or identify the company. While every tour guide wears a blue company shirt for every tour conducted, only 11% of respondents could recognise the blue shirts. Others who had seen the blue shirts had not associated them with the company. One possibility of being unable to identify the company may mean a merging of all slum tour companies in Dharavi into one perception, even if each company has different practices and intentions. One respondent, for example, said:

*"I have seen people walking with blue shirt but I haven't really heard anything" (Male, Dharavi).*

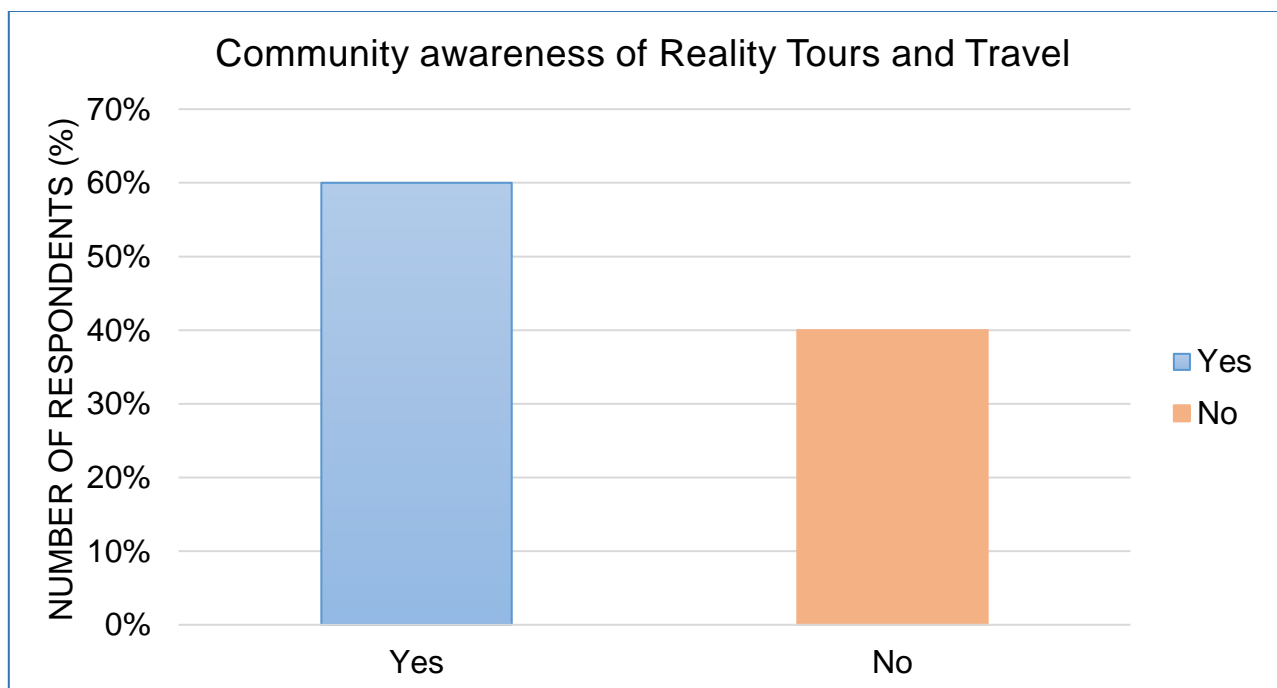


Figure 13: Community awareness of Reality Tours and Travel

#### 4.2.6. Community perception of Reality Tours and Travel

All the respondents who had heard of the company were asked about their perceptions of the company. All but one of these respondents had a positive attitude towards the company. The respondent with a negative perception had expressed a concern that RTT needed to

support the community especially as there were many poor people. However, again this negative perception of the company highlights the respondent's lack of awareness of the company's motive in conjunction with its sister NGO RG, where it in fact uses the profits of the tours to support the community. This demonstrated that having little or no knowledge of the company has the power to shape the perceptions to a more negative light.

The biggest positive perception reflected the respondents' awareness of the company's motives. These respondents were aware that the company is helping challenge the external negative stigmas of the 'slum' and raise awareness of some of the prevalent challenges such as sanitation. Two respondents, for example, stated:

*"Everyone is coming to know about the reality (.) everyone in the world (.) I am very happy about that" (Male, Pottery, Gujarat)*

*"It's good that Reality Tours and Travel are changing people's minds" (Male, Garment, Gujarat)*

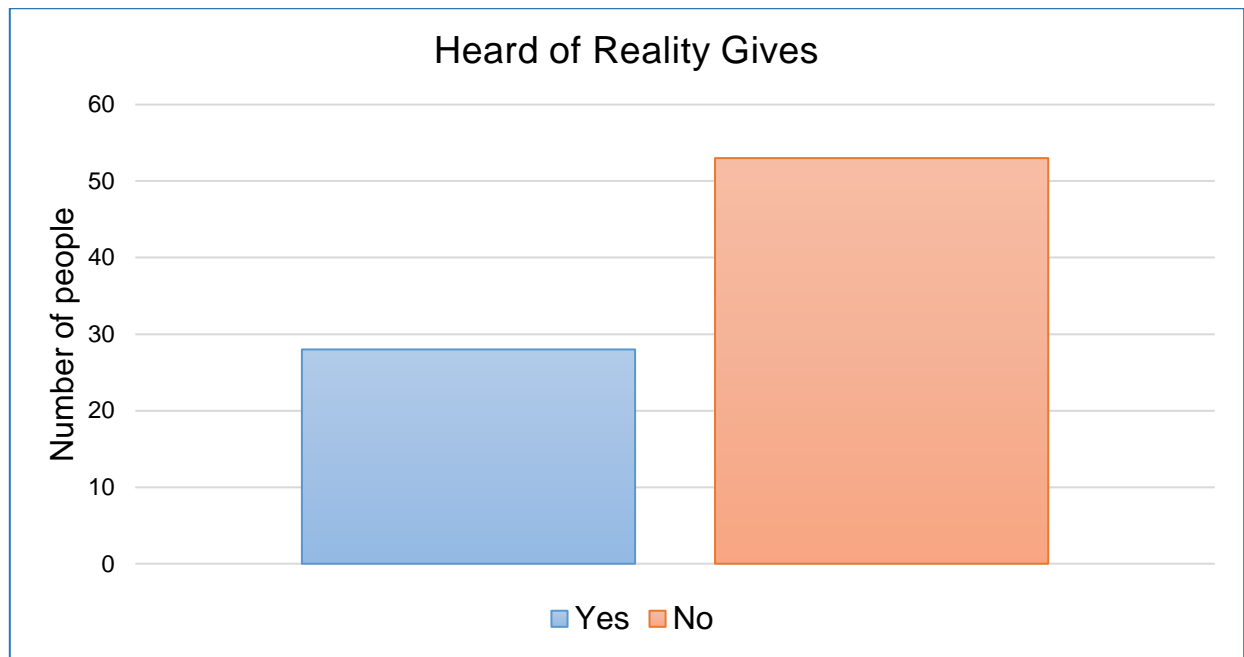
Respondents who shared this view believed those external to the settlement needed to know what it was truly like. Many of the community were aware of the external stigmas and believed the existing stigmas did not represent Dharavi's reality. For this reason, these respondents expressed their happiness that slum tours with the company would be able to challenge this.

### **4.3. The perceptions of the Dharavi community on Reality Gives**

#### **4.3.1. Community awareness of Reality Gives**

All respondents were asked if they had heard of RG (see fig. 14). Surprisingly, most of the respondents (65%) had never heard of it or its link with RTT. Only 35% of the respondents had heard of the organisation. This did not just include respondents who lived or worked far from the charity office and away from the tour route, but it also included people who lived right nearby both the office and the charity's community centres. When asked for an explanation, the respondents stated that the biggest reason for the lack of knowledge of the charity and its projects was due to a lack of information publicised to the community.





*Figure 14: Community awareness of Reality Gives*

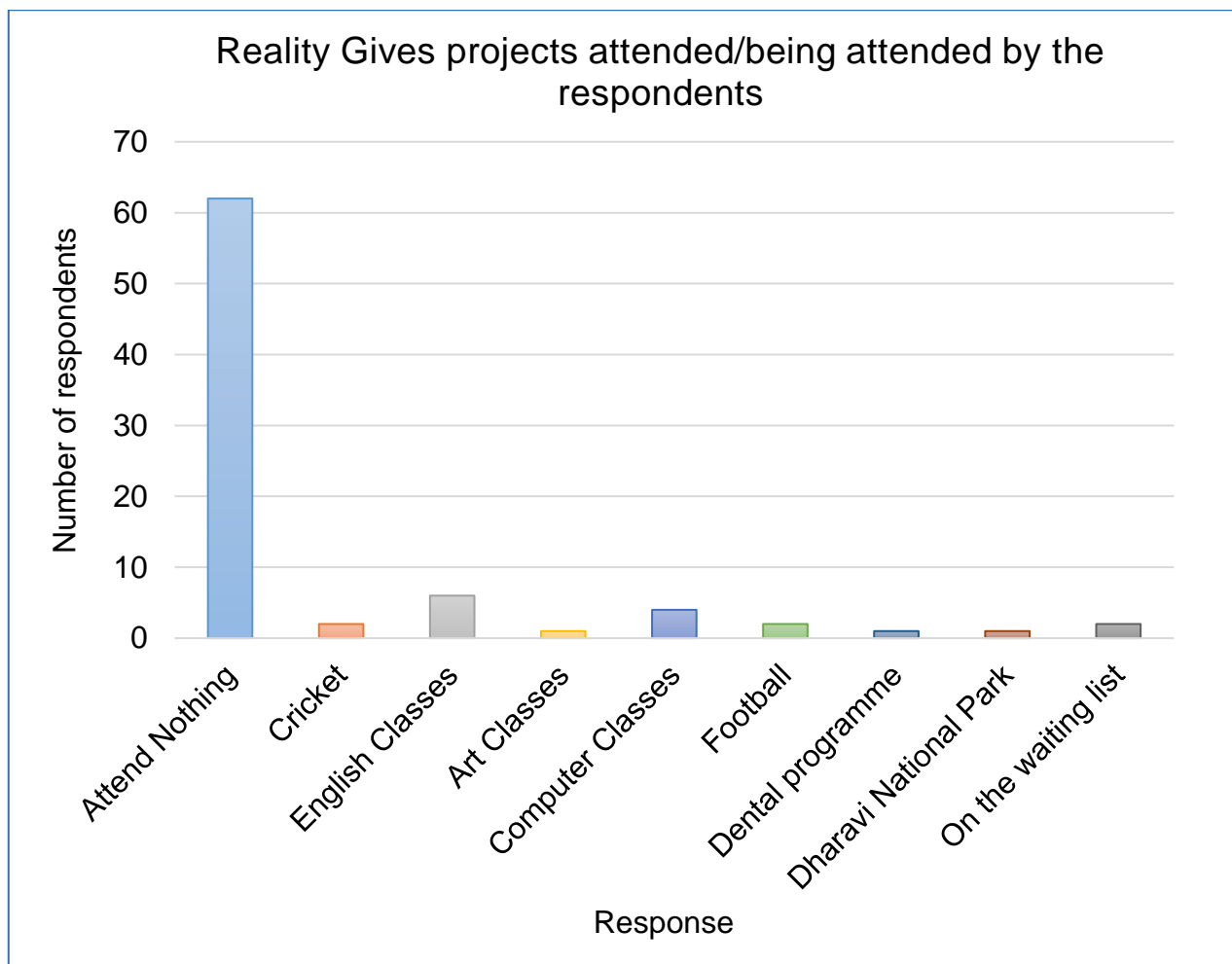
Contrastingly, all but one respondent who had heard of RG had positive opinions of the company and its operations. The one respondent who had a more negative opinion had explained that it was because they wanted their daughter to join the company's computer classes but couldn't because she already had a college education and were working. Those that had a positive perception had mostly explained that it was because they were happy the profits from the tours were being used back into the community. They expressed how it was good that the company were helping to alleviate many of the prevailing issues, such as lack of education. Some respondents with this view, for example, said:

*"I like the company (.) and how they are helping the community (.)"* **(Male, Pottery, Gujarat)**

*"It is good because people are getting to know the real things and getting to know the reality of Dharavi and it is helpful as an NGO so it's good"* **(Male, Dharavi)**

#### 4.3.2. Reality Gives projects attended by the respondents

It was interesting to see how many of the respondents actually attended the projects run by RG. When asked however, only 13% of all the respondents had attended or were attending projects run by RG. Age may have significantly affected this response, as most the respondents were older than 20 years of age. As such, it is difficult to give an in-depth analysis regarding the impacts of the charity on the community. Figure 15 shows the projects which had been or were being attended by the respondents.



*Figure 15: Reality Gives projects attended/being attended by the respondents*

While it was not a large sample to fully explore, the respondents who had attended or were attending projects run by RG were asked to explain what impacts it had on them. All these respondents said it brought beneficial effects ranging from education to fun activities such as playing cricket. In fact, English and Computer classes had the highest attendance by the respondents (see fig. 15). These respondents explained that these classes brought educational benefits which would be useful life skills. A range of these responses included:

*“It is good that we are getting computers and classes (.) and because of tourists coming people started learning computers” (Male, Textiles, Dharavi)*

*“Actually I was part of one of the cricket programs (.) I think what they are doing is a good thing (.) it has impacted a lot of us (.) when people come it is positive and we enjoy cricket (.) we feel positive about it” (Male, Student, Dharavi)*

*“Both my boys got their education from RG (.) from computers and English” (Male, Dharavi)*

“Some people who are very passionate about sport so it is always good when the passion is getting professional coaching” (*Male, Recycling Dharavi*)

The respondents who had heard of RG but were not attending any of the projects were asked for an explanation of the lack of participation. The biggest reason for not attending was due to lack of time which was predominantly due to work. One respondent explained that he believed there were more important things than attending the RG projects such as taking care of his family.

#### 4.3.3. Ways in which the community perception on slum tours changes with knowledge of Reality Tours and Travel and Reality Gives.

Whether the respondents had or had not heard of both RTT and/or RG, they were each given a brief explanation about the link between RTT and RG. Following the explanation respondents were asked if their perception on slum tours had changed. Like Slikker's (2014) thesis, it was difficult to distinguish whether the respondents remained positive or had become more positive. However, the overall perception was either positive (95%) or unknown (5%) (see fig. 16). No respondents remained or felt more negative about slum tourism.

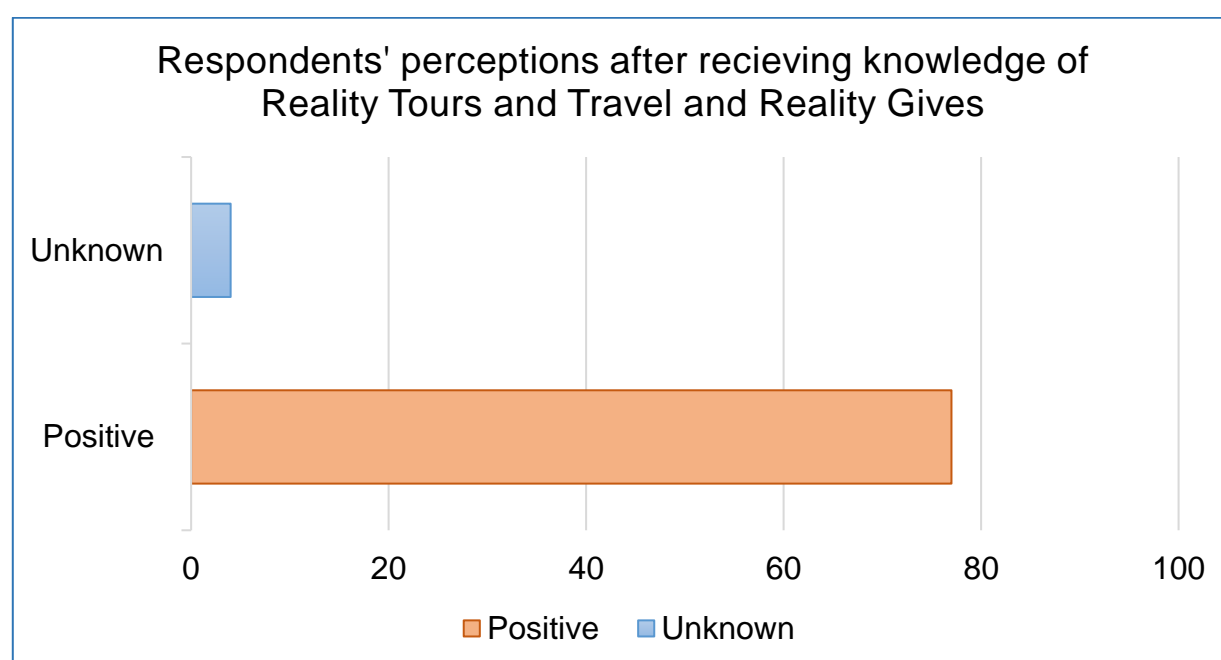


Figure 16: Respondents' Perceptions after knowledge of Reality Tours and Travel and Reality Gives

Much of the positivity was assisted by surprise. Firstly, once told, some of these respondents were positive about the motives of RTT in attempting to change tourist's negative

preconceptions of Dharavi. Responses were typically like: ‘it is good to show the world’ and ‘good to change people’s minds’.

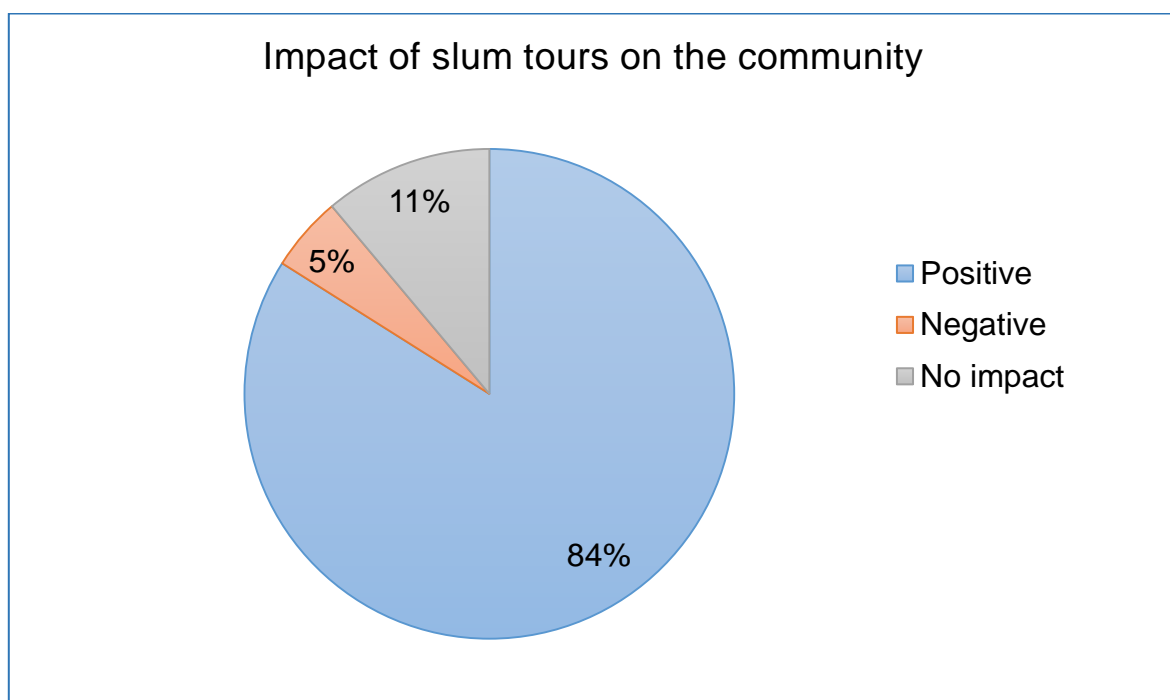
Considering many of the respondents had not heard of RG, they had no idea that the profits from the tours were going into community projects. When they were told about this, they instantly showed signs of more respect for the company and its motives knowing that it was helping the community. Examples of this included:

*“It is really nice that people are helping the community” (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

*“Yes, we are more happy to know that the company has a school and education” (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

#### *4.4. The impacts of Slum Tourism on the community in Dharavi*

With the increasing presence of tourists in Dharavi, it is expected that they may have some impact on the community. For this reason, the community members were asked about what impacts they thought the tourists had on them and the Dharavi community in general. What emerged was a very interesting set of responses, from positive, negative to no impacts (see fig. 17).



*Figure 17: Impact of slum tours on the community*

#### 4.4.1. Confidence

One of the most prominent impacts, stated by the respondents, was the higher confidence levels. Many respondents explained that the presence of the tourists has helped them to become more confident in their social interaction and learning. It seemed that the tourists to a certain extent, have interacted with the community through simply chatting with the people which in turn has personally affected people. One respondent highlighted this when explaining how shy they were before the presence of the tourists but now they talk to everyone in the community:

*“Yes a lot of changes have happened and I have participated in some of the activities (.) and earlier I never used to sit out of the house and talk (.) I was shy but since the last three years my confidence has increased (.) also since the last 3 years even in my marriage I have changed and become more confident (.) I before knew people around but never talked and now everyone knows me” (Male, Garments, Gujarat)*

Many of the tourists are foreign, and with this they bring a mixture of new languages to Dharavi. During the tour, it is natural to expect, for example, that the use of English words by the tourists will be picked up by some of the community. This in fact was confirmed when many of the respondents said that either they or people they knew, especially children, had picked up many English words. What this shows is that the tourists had educational benefits not only for themselves but also for the community members. It is a reciprocal educational interaction, where both cultures can learn about each other. Two respondents had, for example, said:

*“I have learnt some words through the westerners” (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

*“Earlier before we knew RG and RTT I we were not aware of the outer world or their lifestyle and only after this we became aware and were able to speak with them (.) kids were able to copy their living and yes things have changed in a good way (.) you will find that many of the kids will say what is your name which country are you from (.) they feel as if they should speak English (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

#### 4.4.2. Impact on work flow and local businesses

It could be expected that the presence of the tourists may have an impact on the workflow of the community. This is because the tourists watch the work such as, in the textiles, recycling and leather industries. Other times, the tourists walk through the work place such as in one of the blacksmith factories during the RTT tour. Just as Slikker (2014: p. 50) states,

“these areas are potential places that could either bother the hard working people of Dharavi or could offend them if the tourists show signs of disgust or discomfort”. However, most respondents said the tourists had no significant or negative impact on their work flow. The typical response for this was, ‘it does not affect my work flow’. When these respondents were asked for an explanation, just like in Slikker’s (2014) thesis, these respondents mostly said they were too busy to take notice of the tourists and just get on with their work. One respondent who expressed that there was a more negative impact on workflow, had said that it was not necessarily negative but more of a nuisance. This is because the respondent had to stop work in order to show the tourists their work or let them through the building to have a look. They stated:

*“It is not a big problem but just for a couple of minutes people come here and look at this area and that makes our work a little slow (.) and that’s for a couple of minutes” (Male, Recycling, Dharavi)*

On the other hand, the influx of tourists has brought many benefits for the businesses in Dharavi. For example, one respondent explained that the tourists have benefited the business because they can buy products and merchandise which has been created in the settlement. A good example is a leather business which is now incorporated into the tour route. The leather factory has a shop on the side where the tourists can buy leather products. This highlights, that the slum tours can also help to bring money through the businesses in Dharavi too.

#### 4.4.3. Negative impacts

Only a few (5%) respondents had said that slum tours had a negative impact (see fig. 17). One respondent had explained that during the tours there were some people who misbehaved which annoyed the residents and workers. Alternatively, as stated earlier, the respondents who had a negative perception of slum tours due to the use of photography had also explained that they felt at times a sense of intrusion into their life. Some tourists would come and take pictures of their houses and daily life, which at times became ‘annoying’. However, again it is not clear if this is directly related to RTT or other tourists who visit Dharavi on their own or with other tour companies. Alternatively, a few of the respondents (11%) said that they thought there was no impact from the tourists on them or the community. When asked for an explanation, one of these respondents said that they lived far from the tour route or where the tourists tended to visit. Others in this category said

they just didn't think the area had changed even with the increasing presence of the tourists.  
An example of this response included:

*"I don't think anything has changed really" (Male, Plastic, Dharavi)*

## 5. CONCLUSION

To conclude this report, it can be argued that the community's perception in the 'slum' provides a valuable contribution to the slum tourism debate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Much media and scholarship has assumed and claimed that slum tourism is unethical and voyeuristic (Frenzel and Koens, 2012; Frenzel, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012, Basu, 2012 in: Steinbrink *et al*, 2012). While this could be the case with the perceptions of many community members, what in fact was revealed from the respondents in this study was a very different set of responses. Slum tourism has gained significant momentum in Dharavi, Mumbai, even since Niek Slikker conducted his research in 2014 on this topic. This is said to be fuelled by the stigmas and representations around the 'slum' which has stimulated people's interest to visit (Urry, 2002; Ma, 2010; Dyson, 2011; Melik, 2012; Meschkank, 2012). RTT are still the dominant tour company in Dharavi, but of course its popularity has prompted many other slum tour companies to start up in the area.

### *5.1. The perceptions of the Dharavi community on slum tours*

Most of the respondents had explained that they saw the tourists on a daily basis which demonstrates just how prominent the tourists have become in Dharavi. In the past before the influx of the tourists, much of the community said they were confused and curious as to why they were there, compared with now where the sight of tourists has become very normalized. With this, a majority of the respondents had a positive perception towards slum tours and the tourists. Respondents explained that it made them feel good and proud that the tourists got to see the reality of the settlement. While there were only a few, the negative perceptions were associated with photography and the idea that tourists simply come, go and do not help the community. However, it was very evident that these respondents could have had confusion with other tourists and tour companies in Dharavi. This is because RTT do in fact use the profits inside Dharavi to help the community and they have a no photo policy during their tours. Correspondingly, the respondents could not even identify the company's blue shirts which may have added to the confusion.

### *5.2. The perceptions of the Dharavi community on Reality Gives*

It was extremely surprising to find out that most of the respondents had not heard of RG. Subsequently, it was difficult to assess how the RG projects are perceived by the community. This lack of knowledge of RG meant that whether or not many of the respondents had heard of RTT, they had no idea that it was doing more for the community than just showing the tourists around. Thus, community members who had not heard of the charity were extremely



surprised and positive when told about the operations of RTT and RG and its motivations. Even respondents who originally had a more negative perception towards the tourists changed to being more positive with this knowledge. Almost all respondents showed signs of more respect for the charity. As stated before, this lack of knowledge evidently had the power to shape peoples' perceptions to being more negative.

### *5.3. The impacts of slum tourism on the Dharavi community*

This study has revealed that slum tour practice has a variety of impacts on the Dharavi community, of which most are beneficial. Firstly, while only a few of the respondents interviewed had attended or were attending the projects run by RG, they all stated that the projects had brought many benefits ranging from education to fun/social interaction. Alternatively, and interestingly, a large amount of the respondents had explained that the tourists had increased their personal confidence levels. On the other hand, a few respondents who were working, had stated that the tourists were benefiting their businesses because they could buy products made from them. Only a few respondents had issues with the photography and tourists who misbehaved, however this did not appear to be the case all the time. Also, as stated earlier, this negative perception may not be associated with RTT. What seemed to be prominent, was the sense of reciprocal education between the community and the tourists. Respondents highlighted that while the tourists were coming to learn about their community, in fact the community also has a chance to learn about the tourist's cultures. A good example of this is simply the effect of English on the community members; many people and children have now picked up English words.

## 6. RECOMENDATIONS

From the responses of this study, a few recommendations have been made to help Reality Tours and Travel and Reality Gives improve their operations and benefit the community. The following recommendations are a mixture of what the respondents wanted to improve on and results which had emerged during the research.

### 6.1. *Wider advertising to the community*

Based on the results of the interviews, it was evident that many of the respondents had little or no knowledge of RG and its operations despite their presence in the settlement. For this reason, I recommend that the Reality Group do more to try and promote their motives and projects to the community and residents in Dharavi. By doing this the community will be more aware of the principle and incentive behind slum tourism conducted by the organisation and will be more motivated to attend the projects. All respondents who had never heard of RG were then asked if they would attend or send their children to the projects if they had more information. 65% said they potentially would, 5% said they wouldn't and 30% said they didn't know. This is important because as the results have shown, having limited or no knowledge of the charity side of the company influenced the negative perceptions. Suggestions from the respondents included:

*"It is good and it should spread (.) it is better you tell four people instead of one (.) then people will know about you more (.) and it will be good for you"* (**Male, Shopkeeper, Dharavi**)

*"Yes (.) they should do more advertisement like about the school (.) they should make like some small piece of paper and give it to the people"* (**Male, Pottery, Gujarat**)

*"If the kids have benefits everyone should come to know (.) there should be advertisement"* (**Female, Housewife, Dharavi**)

Additionally, many of the respondents could not identify the RTT team in their blue shirts. This may have further influenced the respondents' opinions because if they have heard about the company they may associate it with the more negative practices which are perhaps a part of other tour companies and tourists. Thus, I recommend finding ways which make the community more familiar with the company shirts.

## 6.2. *Interaction with the community*

Secondly, some of the residents said they wanted more interaction with the tourists during the tours. A few respondents had stated that during the slum tours the tourists did not really interact with the community or ask questions. If the tourists were encouraged to ask more questions to the residents themselves, then the residents would be able to learn more about the tourists' backgrounds, increase their language skills such as English, and become more engaged. Many of the residents on the tour route had expressed that they would be happy with providing the tourists with more information about their daily lives provided they ask more questions. One respondent demonstrated this feeling when stating:

*“But it can be better if they talk to the people (.) direct interaction (.) if we say the problem there can be a better solution” (Female, Housewife, Dharavi)*

## 6.3. *Limiting Photographs*

Lastly, some of the residents had explained that the one thing they felt intrusive from the slum tours, were the photographs taken by the tourists. This was due to the intrusion of the privacy of the residents but also because the residents feared that the photographs would expose some of the conditions the products were made in and thus stop the buyers from buying from them. One interviewee, for example, stated:

*“Other companies allow people to take photos (.) and we are scared of exposing bad photos of like food which will stop the orders” (Male, Leather factory, Uttar Pradesh)*

Although these residents had expressed that they had seen this happen, it would not have been with Reality Group according to the RTT. This is because RTT have a no photo policy, where the tourists are only allowed to take one photograph during the whole tour. I would recommend to continue with this policy to ensure the privacy of the residents.

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